



# **YEARS OF SPENDING**

**itv**

**70** itv YEARS OF  
SPENDING

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Want More For Your Money?



# HELLO & WELCOME TO “70 YEARS OF...” YOUR POCKET-SIZED GUIDE TO 70 YEARS OF BRITISH CULTURAL CHANGE

**This year marks 70 years of TV advertising in the UK and 70 years of ITV being on air. In order to celebrate this cultural landmark - ITV media will be taking advertisers on a journey through 70 years of British cultural change in order to better understand our ever changing present.**

**We'll be exploring how the adverts and shows on ITV have shaped, reflected and changed the consumer landscape of mainstream Britain, through the lens of four pillars of consumer behaviour - play, dining, spending and relationships.**

**In this third edition of '70 years of' we're turning our attention to the very thing that makes us consumers ... Spending**

## AN EXPLORATION INTO THE MONEY MINDSETS OF THE NATION

We've utilised a blend of semiotic analysis, 70 years of ITV's subtitle data and expert interviews to understand how the content on ITV has reflected, shaped and changed the nation's spending habits.

How we spend, why we spend and what we choose to spend our money on says an awful lot about the mindset and mood of the nation. For brands it's never been more important to stay on top of the nation's money mindsets. Over the past 70 years the how, why and what of what we spend has changed significantly and at an increasingly rapid pace.



In the space of several decades we've transformed from a nation where money was stored under mattresses to a nation where 94.6% of all eligible in-store card transactions are contactless ([Barclays 2025](#)). From a time where saving for a rainy day was aspirational to savvy spending being the ultimate social flex. From a world where trust in financial institutions was implicit to a world where just 39% of UK adults had confidence in the financial services industry ([FCA, 2025](#)).

In this research we've explored all these shifts in the nation's money mindsets- alongside answering burning questions like: Why is pre-loved the new luxe? What makes Martin Lewis one of the most trusted men in Britain? And is saving for Black Friday the new saving for a rainy day?

**“I’M DOING AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT JOB TO THE ONE I DID THREE MONTHS AGO. NINETY PERCENT OF MY WORK IS ON A NEW SUBJECT THAT DIDN’T EXIST.”**

**MARTIN LEWIS**





# 3 CULTURAL SHIFTS

## WHAT'S CHANGED IN HOW WE SPEND?

In our research exploring 70 years of ITV's current affairs programming and soaps we have uncovered three significant shifts in how Britain spends. In this section we'll dissect these social and cultural changes, exploring what this means for brands looking to tap into spending habits and money mindsets.

### 1

## WHO WE TRUST WITH MONEY HAS GONE FROM THE COLLECTIVE TO THE INDIVIDUAL

Spending is a contract of trust between people, this trust is integral to how we decide to store and save our hard-earned cash. We used to be a society that relied on communities to hold each other accountable and treated money like a communal resource before technology and policy change made financial freedom possible, but with it also came financial uncertainty. What we're seeing today is that Britons are demonstrating a growing self-reliance when it comes to their finances.

### BARCLAYS

THE MAN WITH NO BANK ACCOUNT – 1961



### 1950s - 60s

## TRUST IN THE COLLECTIVE AND INSTITUTIONS

In the 50s and 60s the home was the financial hub and the village was a network of trust where funds could be stored locally and spending aligned with the needs of the collective. This was due to the financial landscape being significantly governed by the state. Financial institutions, banks and building societies operated in tightly controlled environments meaning that financial products were limited. State services such as the NHS provided a safety net protecting individuals from needing to spend on any sudden life changes (illness, unemployment).

British society was rebuilding after the war, meaning that you ought to have been extra nice to your neighbours to maintain trust. Spending was seen as irresponsible and unnecessary whereas saving was virtuous. In our analysis of *Coronation Street* we found that money was often referred to as **“our money”** rather than something that belonged to individuals. From the bank's point of view, Brits still had a lot to learn about money and this was evident in the paternalistic tone of voice coming through their ads. In 1961 Barclays released an ad introducing the ignorant customer to the innovation of banking, positioning it as a more ‘sensible’ choice than dealing with cash. Barclays is depicted as the trusted source of sense and the customer, typically the male breadwinner, is depicted as clumsy with his money and financially inept, something people would probably find a tad offensive today!

## 1970s - 2008

# THE MYTH OF SELF-EMPOWERMENT

Up until the 70s finances were heavily regulated by the state and consumers were bound by societal norms of spending responsibly. The man led the family's spending decisions but that all changed in this new era of empowerment. Significant policy and leadership change unshackled Brits from the sense of restraint that dictated how they spent. Gradually we began to trust in the banks to handle our finances signalling a quiet shift to a more personal approach to finance.

## 70s

The election of Margaret Thatcher in 1979 marked a pivotal shift towards a new individualist consumer mindset on spending. If you wanted to climb the social ladder you had to hit the high street and spend. Making financial decisions as an individual was a sign of power...and this power was shifting for the first time. The Equal Pay Act (1970) and Sex Discrimination Act (1975) made it illegal to pay women less for the same work and protected them from discrimination in employment; marking the beginning of financial independence for women from their husbands.

By the 90s approximately 70% of women were in work, redefining the financial make-up of British households. Unfortunately for Thatcher, her election as prime minister coincided with the OPEC Oil Crisis (1979) that had sent ripples throughout the global economy for a second time, sending inflation rates into double digits and increasing energy and fuel.

In an effort to get the nation to reduce overall energy costs the government department responsible for Energy at the time turned to TV as a behaviour changing force with the Save It campaign starring TV cook Delia Smith. The film shows Delia encouraging home cooks to batch-cook to save fuel with an inspirational slogan: "a good cook is an economical cook". Even businesses during this time were dealing with rising prices and it became incredibly competitive to keep customers coming through their doors. Anyone who could still afford to maintain their lifestyle, even if it meant getting a credit card, was rewarded social status.

## DELIA SMITH, SAVE IT CAMPAIGN – 1970



## 80s - 2008

Thatcher's tenure also saw an increasing number of ways to pay for things and build your wealth with the deregulation of the London Stock Exchange allowing ordinary consumers to become investors. The introduction of ISAs (Individual Savings Accounts), defined contribution pensions and a significant increase in the availability of credit – the individual became empowered to influence their own state of affairs in other words, now your money could make money. Mentions of **'wealth'** peaked in 1980 on Coronation Street reflecting how wealth became something to be praised and celebrated. Banks also wanted to cash in on this newly wealthy consumer. They saw an opportunity to incentivise customers with additional benefits if they used their products such as insurance on investments and it was working. Brits began to warm to the occasional splurge at the cost of borrowing albeit and going into debt – I don't think Martin Lewis wouldn't have been too happy!

## 2010 THE BUBBLE BURSTS

For the most part the 2000s saw steady economic growth and things were looking bright again as inflation rates reduced and then came the Global Financial Crisis of 2008. Excessive and reckless lending from the banks and globally traded debt led to an unsustainable housing bubble and the end of an era of consumption fueled by easy credit. Banks and financial brands were scrambling to win back trust from customers, humanising their brands with friendly mascots like Sergay the Meerkat and Howard of Halifax.

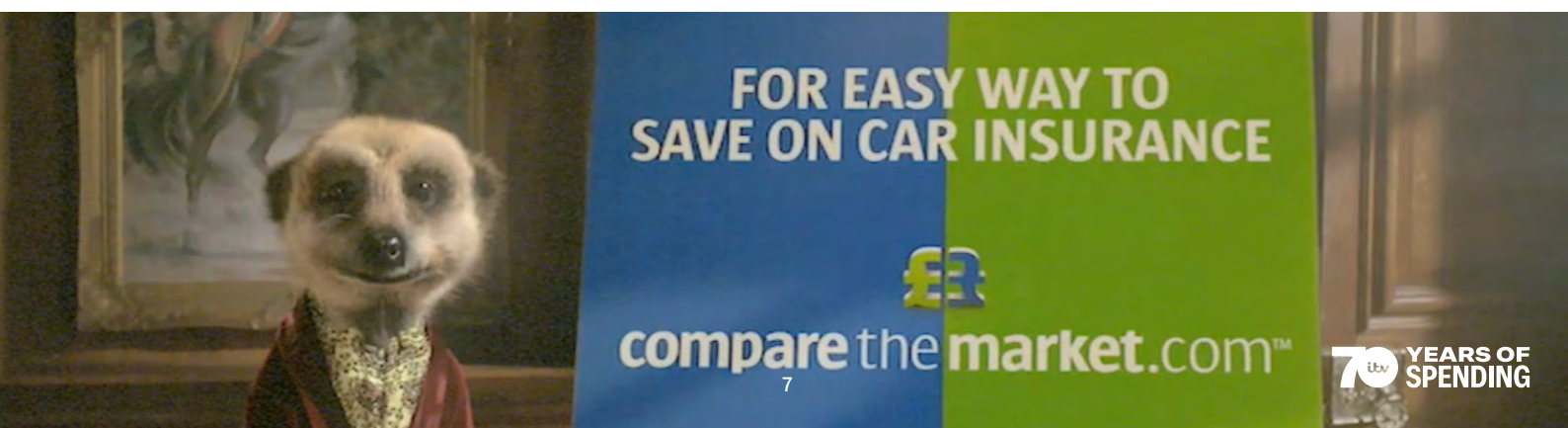
[Compare the Market - Compare the Meerkat](#)

### Lloyds For the Journey (2009)

approached this period of financial depression by positioning themselves as a long-term companion that would see you through all of life's milestones. These ads make use of animated surrealism and humour in an attempt to warm up to risk-averse customers.



Trust in the system was diminishing and consumers needed a guiding force to restore their faith in their finances. Banks were no longer the trusted service provider they once were creating a void in how people understood finances. Enter The Martin Lewis Money Show. Launching in 2012 he became essential viewing. Martin became something of a hero unafraid to pull the mask off of overcomplicated financial systems that weren't serving the average Brit. Martin Lewis was revolutionising financial literacy. The show was set up not only to involve the audience at home but a live audience and a group selected participants. It was designed so that the everyman had a fair chance against "the system".





**“EVERYONE TALKS ABOUT THE WAY HE’S A GREAT COMMUNICATOR... I THINK HE’S A BETTER TRANSLATOR, HE TAKES ALL THIS INFORMATION AND HE BOILS IT DOWN TO WHAT IS THE ACTUAL ESSENCE TO WHAT IS IT WE NEED TO KNOW.”**

CLARE MILLER, EXECUTIVE EDITOR OF THE MARTIN LEWIS MONEY SHOW LIVE





# monzo



## 2020s

Banks had pivoted to align with this desire to be empowered and acknowledged in a new 'Neobanking' – digital only – approach. The likes of Monzo and Starling spearheading the digital banking revolution, providing individuals with the refreshed financial autonomy that was encouraged in the 80s. Colourfully visualised transaction data gave consumers real-time insight into how they were spending, encouraging more dependency on financial technology to take care of their money. Renowned for their bottom up approach Monzo's tone of voice and technology come together to create a financial toolkit of sorts for the working-class Brit, summed up brilliantly with their sausage roll dispensing ATMmms in partnership with Greggs – [Monzo x Greggs, ATMmms, 2024](#).



# SO WHAT?

## BE A TRUSTED SIDEKICK IN A LANDSCAPE OF IMPENETRABLE ALGORITHMS

Financial institutions play a key role in the relationship between a consumer and their trust in their finances. Brands need to further position themselves as, not a supervisor or a facilitator, but a supportive sidekick. The relationship customers hold with their banks, credit card companies and building societies should be a partnership of information and advice.

Customers want to be in control of their finances, but want to do it on their own terms and to form their own opinions about how they spend and save. With authorities like Martin Lewis teaching consumers to look at their financial options from all angles, financial institutions can only provide the tools, but the customer wants to learn how to wield them.

## CASE STUDY NATIONWIDE

A recent campaign by Nationwide depicted the financial institution as digging their heels in when the rest of the category begins to move away from in-person experiences. With the message 'we're staying put', **Nationwide** has committed to keeping their branches open, even if it's more convenient and cost efficient to become digitally native. By being seen as 'behind the times', the brand has solidified its commitment to all of its customers, even those that don't bank online. The result of this campaign has awarded the brand Which? Banking Brand of the Year 2025.





# FUTURE OF SPENDING

## SECURITY OVER SPEED

The next phase of spending may be shaped by a growing desire for **security over speed**. After years of scattered trust and increasing financial self-reliance, people appear to be looking for steadier ground - institutions, tools and brands that help them feel anchored rather than overwhelmed. The popularity of the **Martin Lewis' Money Show** is undeniable, where millions tune in for clarity and reassurance, and in the rise of **Nationwide's commitment to keep branches open**, which speaks directly to people who feel unsettled by the pace of digital change. Even digital-native brands like **Monzo** are leaning into features that build confidence - budgeting tools, bill-splitting protections, and clear safety prompts. If these trends continue, confidence (not convenience alone) could become the deciding factor in how and where people choose to spend. Brands that can offer transparency and a human touch may be best placed to meet this emerging mindset, giving people confidence to make decisions on their own terms.



## 2

# FROM CASH UNDER THE MATTRESS TO THE MONEYVERSE?

**Today money doesn't feel like a real thing that we can account for, it's become something abstract and intangible. We've gone from keeping money under the mattress to a world of digitalised transactions that is run through systems and algorithms beyond the average consumer's understanding. In 2024, 64% of all payments were made by card which begs the question, how well do we really know our spending habits? (UK Finance)**

The shift towards a cashless society is being driven by digital financial products that make it more convenient than ever to spend, save and borrow. This shift will explore what going cashless means for British consumers and how it's shaping our spending habits.



## 50 - 60s ALL IN THIS TOGETHER

Handling transactions with cash forced us to reckon with budgets and be realistic about how much we were worth. It also meant that if money was lost, stolen or found it didn't happen by some technical error, someone could be held accountable. Cash transactions helped maintain financial responsibility in society and as we became more protective of it we developed a scarcity mindset around money. In fact the concept of saving was much more prevalent **in earlier episodes of Coronation Street, with mentions of 'save' being almost 90% higher than they are in 2025.**

## 70s - 90s IF YOU'VE GOT IT FLAUNT IT

In 1966 Barclays introduced the UK's first credit card, revolutionizing not only how we spend, but how we pay. Barclays arrived on the market with a huge advertising budget which tells us they were looking to create waves in the banking category. They had a job to educate the public on what credit was and that it was more than just an American import but a product they should trust.

Consumers priorities had shifted, at the time being socially accepted was crucial for any kind of social mobility. Coronation Street echoed this sentiment as characters priorities began to revolve around keeping up appearances and having enough capital to be seen consuming.





## 70s

In this [American Express advert](#) we see an upper echelon of society spending in aspirational settings before we hear the line “American express says more about you than cash ever will”. It signalled that American Express users had access to a particular privilege and status that cash users simply couldn’t understand.

People used to be protective over their money and every single penny counted and had to be justified or be considered waste. In the 80s being savvy was no longer in fashion, being cautious with your money signified that you were from a lower-income household. This wasn’t by accident however, one of our experts Chris Choi cites marketing as a key driver behind this shift in spending.

## 80s

Spending was being driven by conspicuous consumption, consumers purchased things that would not only simplify daily life but also demonstrate their economic strength and social standing. Like [luxury soap!](#) With increasing globalisation and credit card usage in full swing it became popular to purchase convenient goods and electronics such as mobile phones and computers. Even convenience-driven purchases were positioned as aspirational and grand like in the 1985 [Volkswagen GTI Casino advert](#), albeit there was still a lingering anxiety around larger investments.

Widespread commercial retail and the marketing of branded goods filled with

**“I MEAN, IMAGINE THINKING THAT A BAR OF SOAP IS A LUXURY, BUT IT CAN BE IF YOU INVEST IT WITH THAT KIND OF STORY. SO I THINK THAT MARKETING SAW AN OPPORTUNITY TO OPEN THE DOOR FOR SPLURGES ON QUITE SMALL THINGS BUT WHICH CAN BE REGULAR AND IMPORTANT TO PEOPLE.”**

ITV NEWS CONSUMER EDITOR, CHRIS CHOI

a plethora of options made spending feel less tangible and grounded than it once was.

Brands were attempting to appear as more aspirational, well aware that consumers were adopting credit as a way to increase spending power. Money was burning a hole in the pockets of consumers who were up to their eyes in products to choose from and could now spend far more easily without the hassle of cash transactions. As a result spending was starting to feel less like a tangible experience grounded in purchasing needs over wants, it was all about the splurge.

## 2000s - 2010s DIGITAL DEBT

Technology was already changing personal finance and spending habits in unpredictable ways. After the 2008 financial crisis, services like [Wonga.com](http://Wonga.com), a payday loan firm allowed consumers to carry on as normal while financial insecurity was rife. In their 'Split Personality' advert. In the [advert](#) an actor is dressed as a both Wonga employee and a customer, switching between the two personas to show customers how easy it was to get a same day loan.

While this was only a temporary fix consumers could effectively carry on as normal despite the ongoing financial chaos that ensued in 2008. Money was no longer grounded by ownership of something physical that you could see and measure; it was floating in the ether and subject to economic and political forces beyond our control. Wonga's product reinforced the idea that money was intangible and could be gained and lost at the click of a button.



**2009**  
**WONGA.COM, SPLIT PERSONALITY**

## 2020s THE ERA OF INVISIBLE MONEY

Now that we've established money isn't real, what does that mean for our personal finances? Well, when you look at digital-only banks such as Starling they thrive in this era. With slick user interfaces and exaggerated sound effects Starling makes spending feel akin to a game that rewards you for transactions.

In Starling's Set Yourself Free campaign we see a customer queuing in typical British fashion, at a traditional bank, fly into the air literally and symbolically breaking free from the shackles of banking the 'old way'. Without mentions or imagery relating to a physical transaction the ad is a clear marker that the new customer was departing from sluggish banking methods of the past.

With this ad Starling is saying that money is no longer a physical thing; in fact, they argue we don't even need to see it to pay for stuff. It's a bit of a head-scratcher, isn't it? Digital banking actually makes it easier to spend freely and seamlessly by taking the idea of money – that classic token for trade – out of the physical world altogether.



**2021**  
**STARLING, SET YOURSELF FREE**

# SO WHAT?

## MONEY IS NOT A DIRTY WORD

**Digital banking, contactless spending and money that leaves your account without you even knowing it means that individuals are growing to accept this idea that money isn't real.**

Money is already a stigmatised topic, so consumers feeling even further away from it only worsens this stigma that it's something we shouldn't talk about so freely which can actually set us back when it comes to spending responsibly. So how can brands step in and use their trusted voices to encourage financial introspection and bring tangibility back to money. The job to be done is to get the nation talking about it, by making it mainstream and showing spenders that they're alone in this stigma.

### CASE STUDY

## LLOYDS THE M-WORD

**Lloyds** aimed to break the taboo of talking about money based on an insight that money was a more sensitive subject for families to discuss than religion or politics while anxiety around money is high (YouGov). The result was a wholesome 30s **film** that saw a range of families' awkward reactions to the topic of talking about money with one another. Lloyds was able to reveal so much through the simple campaign, through facial expressions, umms and ahhs around a touchy topic reflecting back to the audience that they're not the only ones struggling to use the "m-word".





# THE FUTURE OF SPENDING



## THE RETURN OF REAL

The next phase of our cashless evolution may not be about faster tech but clearer translation. As money becomes even more digital, consumers seem to be looking for ways to make it feel tangible again. We're already seeing hints of this: tools like **Monzo's instant notifications, Starling's spending breakdowns**, or **Lloyds' Save the Change** feature that rounds up everyday purchases - each one helping people "see" their money move in real time. Even the rise of **cash-stuffing videos on TikTok** shows a cultural desire to reconnect with something physical when digital spending feels too effortless.

Increasingly, people are using credit cards or BNPL **strategically** to build credit or spread costs, rather than playfully loading up impulse buys. If these patterns continue, brands that help people see, feel and understand their finances - rather than simply smoothing the path to spending - may earn deeper loyalty. The future of cashless spending won't be about removing all friction, but designing the **right kind of friction**: thoughtful nudges, visual cues and real-world anchors that help people stay in control.





3

# WE'VE GONE FROM THINKING ABOUT SPENDING TO FEELING IT

So as a nation, how do we think about money? Or do we feel it instead? This shift takes a look at how external circumstances have shaped our perspective on how money should be used. Spending has shifted from an emotionless and highly rationalised decision to a far more emotional decision dictated by our mood, status and values.

## 50 - 60s POST-WAR SCARCITY

In 1950s Post-War Britain rationing had only recently ended and so material goods were sparse and were still considered a luxury. There was a consensus that we should be frugal and sensible with our money to the extent that 'splurging' was buying a new sofa or a fridge, things that would really last and make domestic life more comfortable. You could see these everyday notions of luxury reflected in gameshows like *Take Your Pick* and *Double Your Money* who awarded winning contestants with snazzy home appliances like fridge freezers and washing machines.

Purchases had to be thoughtful and rationalised, there were strict social guard rails around essential spending. *Coronation Street* reflected this theme in its early episodes, emphasising how money wasted was almost sinful and took away from its societal purpose at the time. Money had become moralised: wasted money was inherently wrong however preserving money and investing wisely was considered righteous.



**"WELL, WE'RE  
STILL SPENDING  
TOO MUCH AND  
PRODUCING  
BUGGER ALL,  
THOUGH,  
AREN'T WE?"**

**CORONATION STREET, 1966**

## 70s - 90s

# INDIVIDUALISM AND THE EMPOWERED CONSUMER

In the 80s *The Price is Right* aired on ITV, a gameshow focused entirely on consumer literacy. Contestants are tasked with bidding on the retail price of various consumer goods and whoever bids the closest without going over wins the prize. By this point the threshold for luxury and effectively what was considered worth spending on began to shift. Luxury was becoming accessible through everyday comforts at more affordable prices and *The Price is Right* shows how consumers were increasingly becoming aware of the pricing of goods. Successful contestants didn't only guess the price right but they proved that they were commodity literate consumers i.e. savvy shoppers.

The empowered consumer wasn't defined by their hard-won money and work ethic but rather their ability to compare goods and attentiveness to the price-tag. It became a badge of honour.

Marketing became more targeted as the consumer evolved. Marketers understood that particular groups of consumers in society were more ready to spend than others. **'The Pink Pound'** is a term that appeared in the *Guardian* in 1984 to refer to the purchasing power of the LGBTQ+ community, with a particular recognition of the spending habits of gay couples. Driven by the assumption that same-sex couples were often 'DINK' (Double income, no kids) households and would have a higher disposable income, therefore more likely to spend on discretionary goods.



### Chuck out your Chintz - IKEA, 1996

Ikea was one of the first major brands that recognised the opportunity and openly advertised in an inclusive way with their **Dining Room Table** ad (1994) featuring a gay couple purchasing their first serious dining table. Ikea demonstrated this strategy again in *Chuck Out Your Chintz* ad (1996) which sees a group of neighbourly women collectively 'chucking' out their old fashioned furniture, seemingly of a British taste for a modern Swedish design. **Naresh Ramchandani** the marketer who came up with the idea realised that the brand needed to target women who supposedly made most of the decisions in the home but didn't opt for Ikea.

The shift marked the point where spending moved from a pragmatic process born out of necessity and moral obligation to the collective, to a more personal choice dictated by savvy consumer literacy and targeted marketing.



**“I JUST THINK WE’RE MORE SAVVY,  
I’M NOT JUST GOING TO TAKE THE  
FIRST PRICE, WE’RE GOING TO DO  
OUR SHOPPING, DO OUR HOMEWORK.”**

CLARE MILLER, EXECUTIVE EDITOR OF THE MARTIN LEWIS MONEY SHOW LIVE

## **2000s – 2020s**

### **SAVVY SHOPPER VS ONLINE SHOPAHOLIC**

Consumers weren’t holding back or trying to curb their consumption but rather they were finding ways to have their cake and eat it. Finding ways to cut costs while not giving up established spending habits which is what online retail offered them. A world of shopping at their fingertips. Whether it was buying own-brand, off-season or sale items, savvy shoppers could save discreetly without worrying about how they may be perceived.

In fact, being a savvy consumer was a sign of your smarts! Consumer knowledge continued to be an indicator of how intelligent of a consumer you were all the way into the 2020s. In this [Tesco Christmas ad](#) from the noughties we see a grandmother take her grandchild to a 24-hour Tesco superstore in the late hours of the evening to take advantage of the quieter shopfloor instead of babysitting at home. It was a clear signal that brands were clocking onto consumer savviness and were highlighting ways that shoppers could take advantage of their products in peak shopping periods.

British society had succumbed to the cycle of bustling holiday seasons fuelled by discounts, brand activity and gift giving. Spending wasn’t slowing down but how we navigated it was evolving.

## **2000s**

### **TESCO, CHRISTMAS**





Clothes  
love all.



Clothes  
love all.



**“People find the pressure to spend at Christmas. Sometimes that’s really difficult if you’re struggling financially, especially in the cost of living. It’s kind of giving yourself a bit of permission to go **“DO I REALLY NEED TO SPEND THIS MONEY?”** You get into a debt cycle don’t you. I buy you a present, you buy me a present then you’ve got to buy that person a present and we can’t leave that person out... it perpetuates.”**

**CLARE MILLER, EXECUTIVE EDITOR OF THE MARTIN LEWIS MONEY SHOW LIVE**

Seamless Buy-Now-Pay-Later schemes, such as Klarna normalised overconsumption, enabling consumers to delay facing the harsh reality of money leaving your account in a lump sum. How dare it!

In their **Clothes Love All campaign Klarna** celebrates all things fashion and how clothes can make us feel good about ourselves with the underlying message that spending shouldn’t get in the way of that.

As we approached the 2020s savviness became more than a strategy to spend guilt-freely but a personal brand that said you were diligent, ethical and seeking long-term value. Maybe you were a Vinted veteran or a yellow-label legend, you knew something others didn’t and that was valuable. We see this reflected in our content, with deal-hunting becoming a staple on

This Morning, while **mentions of the word ‘deal’ increased significantly, rising by 90% from the noughties to the 2020s on Coronation Street**. Retailers orchestrate supply chains and sales cycles from behind the scenes, essentially allowing consumers to achieve that winning feeling of ‘finding a deal’ all year round. The careful, preventative savviness people once needed in the 1950s had all but disappeared; today, being savvy was less about necessity and more about the thrill – the feeling – of landing a bargain rather than simply saving a bit of money.



# SO WHAT?

## SPENDING IS COMPARTMENTALISED

**Consumer spending is being compartmentalised into two genres: need and want. Brands should be aware that consumers will be savvy with their money when they want to spend, save and earn for their 'needs' so they can splurge on their 'wants'. From credit score improvement, to investing, to 'save the change' schemes, brands need to further celebrate and facilitate their customers' money going further.**

On top of this, consumers are spending their money with more intention, doing more research into who they spend and save with. Brands must be an ally in this quest for ethical and intentional transactions.

Ultimately, brands need to help consumers feel good about how and why they choose to spend and save money.

### CASE STUDY

## EBAY & LOVE ISLAND

eBay and Love Island collaborated to break down the barrier between aspirational spending ('wants') and conscious consumption ('needs') by providing contestants with a pre-loved wardrobe instead of clothing from a fast-fashion partner. Demonstrating that ethical and intentional transactions don't mean that you have to compromise on style or social status, if anything a rare eBay find is a social flex. This partnership helped consumers understand that intentional choice was the most aspirational. eBay and Love Island allowed viewers to justify their 'want' (maybe a new outfit) by aligning it with their 'need' for savviness and sustainability, effectively using the influential platform of Love Island to make the intentional transaction the most aspirational choice.



# THE FUTURE OF SPENDING



## THE AGE OF EMOTIONAL MONEY

The next phase of spending looks set to be shaped by a rise in **emotional money literacy**: a growing awareness not just of what we buy, but how it makes us feel. Younger consumers in particular are blending pragmatism with personality, using second-hand platforms like Vinted and eBay as badges of savviness, celebrating “good finds” on TikTok, or playfully rationalising purchases through “girl math.”

At the same time, tools like ClearScore, Starling’s “Spaces” or Monzo’s “Pot Goals” show people want to make smarter choices without sacrificing small joys.

We’re also seeing rising concern around **credit scores, greenwashing, and ethical boycotts**, suggesting consumers are doing more homework before spending – especially during high-emotion moments like Christmas, when ‘buying well’ becomes part of the ritual. If these trends continue, the future of spending may be defined by people seeking **purchases that feel aligned with their identity, values and emotional needs**. Brands that help people navigate that balance – between caution and pleasure, price and principle – may resonate most.



# TIMELINE OF SPENDING

## 1960s FROM AUSTERITY TO ASPIRATION: BUYING YOUR WAY TO THE 'GOOD LIFE'

The 1960s cemented **consumption** as vital, moving from austerity to an **aspirational**, credit-fuelled **lifestyle**. While the male maintained financial control, the woman's role as the primary purchaser of **household goods** was elevated within the domestic sphere. Advertising shifted from demonstrations to selling the **lifestyle** afforded by wealth. The pursuit of the **'good life'** (e.g., a modern kitchen or new car), aided by instalment credit (Hire Purchase), led to increased spending on home and entertainment, driven by the social pressure of **'Keeping up with the Joneses'**.



## KEY MOMENTS

### THE DOMESTIC POWERSHIFT

UK advertisements focusing on the home in the 1960s were heavily driven by themes of **modernisation**, **convenience** through new technology, and the reinforcing of **traditional gender roles**. As shown in this ad for **Hoover Junior**.

### SELLING THE 'GOOD LIFE'

Early ads moved from simple product demonstrations to selling the **lifestyle** that wealth and consumption afforded. Advertising encouraged the new reality that a better home, a new car, or a modern kitchen was an achievable individual goal.

## 1970s FROM PURSE STRINGS TO POWER: SISTERS DOING IT FOR THEMSELVES

The 1970s saw the **feminist movement** drive a fundamental shift away from the traditional family structure towards an **individualist** consumer mindset. **Economic emancipation** and the rise of women in the workforce transformed personal earnings from a legal right into a financial reality, giving women control over their own money. This new spending power unlocked entirely **new consumer categories** focused on the self, such as fashion and beauty. As soaring inflation threatened to undermine these new lifestyles and social status towards the decade's end, many consumers increasingly turned to **credit** to maintain their aspirations.



### THE 1975 SEX DISCRIMINATION ACT

A foundational moment for **financial equality**, this Act banned discrimination against women in the provision of credit, loans, and mortgages, directly unlocking **modern financial freedom**.

### THE 1972 LAUNCH OF THE ACCESS CARD

A joint venture by major UK banks (NatWest, Lloyds, RBS, and Midland), the arrival of this card broke Barclays' monopoly, mainstreaming the use of credit cards and rapidly expanding the **consumer credit market**.



1980s

## SWIPE RIGHT FOR STATUS: FROM ASPIRATION TO REALITY

Margaret Thatcher's 1979 election ushered in an era of economic liberalism and **individual self-determination**. New investment opportunities like ISAs and pensions enabled citizens to build **individual wealth and status**. **Aspiration** drove normalized splurging, deeply linked to brand identity, fueling growth in sectors like electronics, automotive, and designer fashion. Coveted branded goods became symbols of success, easily attainable with the mainstreaming of credit cards.



## KEY MOMENTS

### THE BIG BANG & THE CREDIT CARD INFERNO

The **1986 'Big Bang'** deregulation of the London Stock Exchange detonated a financial free-for-all. Cheap credit fueled an explosion in the **credit card market**, giving consumers an instant, mainstream weapon for impulse spending.

### THE 'BUY NOW, PAY LATER' REVOLUTION

Catalogue giants like Argos mainstreamed **'buy now, pay later'** plans. This redefined debt for ordinary consumers allowing instant aspirational purchases. The Argos **'It's So Easy'** ad shows families browsing the coveted Argos Catalogue.

### THE PRICE IS RIGHT

Gameshows like **The Price is Right** made pricing awareness key. The **'savvy shopper'** was defined by their ability to compare goods and know the price-tag.

1990s

## THE BUST AFTER THE BOOM

What Goes Up Must Come Down  
The 1990s began with a **deep recession** in the UK. High interest rates, imposed to combat inflation, caused soaring unemployment and a housing market crash, forcing households to prioritize **essentials** over aspirational goods. Consequently, the first half of the decade saw more cautious household finances and a reluctance toward debt. However, the latter half brought a return to **economic growth** and renewed financial **confidence and control**, spurred by the financial services sector.



### THE DAWN OF PERSONAL FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Relaxed advertising rules led to a surge in campaigns for personal financial products: **pensions, unit trusts, mortgages, and credit cards**. These advertisements aggressively promoted the message that the individual consumer was fully **in control** and responsible for securing their own financial future through personalised products.

### THE FINANCIALISATION OF LEISURE (GAME SHOWS)

The rise of high-stakes game shows like **Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?** celebrated the idea of a **life-changing** individual win. This entertainment mirrored a new financial ideology where success was seen as a product of individual risk, knowledge, and luck—effectively turning personal finance into a spectator sport.

2000s

## CONVENIENCE WAS KING, THEN VALUE BECAME VIRTUE

The 2000s ushered in the **digital revolution**, with the internet and online retail becoming mainstream. The rise of e-commerce meant shopping no longer required a trip to the busy High Street, allowing purchases to be made with **unprecedented convenience** at any time of the day or night. This boom in accessibility, however, was dramatically curtailed when the country plunged into **recession in 2008**. As a result of the global financial crisis and rising inflation, consumer habits were abruptly reprioritised, transforming value into the key purchasing virtue and shifting focus away from sheer convenience.



### THE RECKONING OF EASY CREDIT

Reckless bank lending and debt triggered the collapse of the housing bubble and the **Global Financial Crisis**. The resulting recession forced a rapid **recalibration of consumer priorities**.

### BRANDS CELEBRATE THE CLEVER CONSUMER

Brands were actively celebrating the **clever** consumer, not just selling products, by showing shoppers how to navigate peak periods and tight budgets. Demonstrated by this **Tesco Christmas ad** showing a savvy grandmother maximising her time in a 24-hour store.

## 2010s PUTTING THE POWER BACK IN PEOPLE'S POCKETS: THE DEMOCRATISATION OF FINANCIAL LITERACY

The 2010s redefined the 'savvy shopper' from simply 'cheap' to 'smart'. Maximising budgets through promotions and comparison shopping became a celebrated badge of honour, a post-recession shift. This anxiety drove the success of programs like **The Martin Lewis Money Show**, which democratised financial literacy. Retailers' strategic deep discounting further empowered this new 'smart' consumer.



## KEY MOMENTS

### THE RISE OF THE 'SMART' SHOPPER

Programs like **The Martin Lewis Money Show Live** (2012) became essential viewing. This phenomenon signaled a massive cultural shift: the average person now explicitly felt the **need for an expert to navigate** a financial world that had become too complex, individualised, and high-risk following the recession.

### THE BLACK FRIDAY REVOLUTION

Driven by US retailers, the promise of huge discounts in late November became the **most significant accelerator of the earlier spending trend**. This event fundamentally broke the decades-old tradition of discounts only happening after Christmas (January sales) and shifted the peak gifting purchase period from early December to the last week of November.

## 2020s ETHICS, INDIVIDUALITY, AND RECOMMERCE: THE NEW RULES OF COOL

The 2020s, shaped by the pandemic and cost of living crisis, have fundamentally altered spending habits. Despite new channels like social commerce, **splurging is now largely seen negatively, while second-hand buying is celebrated as 'cool' and virtuous**, signalling environmental and financial savvy. New purchases involve active deal-seeking and 'Buy Now, Pay Later' use. Technology offers individuals real-time money control, but algorithms increasingly manage critical financial decisions, signifying a **transfer of high-level control from human to machine**.



### THE GREAT HOME SHIFT: MONEY MOVES FROM TRAVEL TO TERRACES

The COVID-19 pandemic immediately re-routed consumer spending, **moving money away from leisure, travel, and public life toward home improvements, digital services, and at-home entertainment**.

### THE COST OF LIVING & THE NEVER-ENDING SALE

Driven by soaring inflation, the Cost of Living Crisis forced consumers into **perpetual 'deal-hunting'**. The retail calendar morphed into a constant cycle of promotions, as people became highly strategic about spreading and maximizing their diminished budget.

### MAKE SPENDING GREAT AGAIN (MONZO)

Campaigns like **Monzo's Money Never Felt Like Monzo** directly **challenged the anti-splurge culture**. The digital bank used intentionally absurd and abstract emotional advertising to **make spending feel 'good'** and celebrate consumption in an era marked by financial anxiety.



# WANT MORE FOR YOUR MONEY?

## BOOK IN A BESPOKE PRESENTATION FROM ITV'S CULTURAL INSIGHT TEAM

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